## SHORT STORIES

THE WRITERS OF THEM AND THE MAGAZINE EDITORS.

WHEREIN WE EXCEL THE FRENCH

They Outstep Us in Having More Play for the Imagination.

BANEFUL EFFECT OF "CITY" INFLUENCE.

Erme Printed and Just Comments on the "Syndicate Editor" and the Newspapers He Controls --- Too Much of the One-Man Power.

So much has been recently written on the subject of short story writing, that one can easily imagine a considerable hint of staleness in whatever might be now added to the discussion; but the drift of the whole body of fiction toward extreme, almost journalistic condemnation, warrents the ven ture of a few more suggestions.

I have seen it often asserted that, next to the French, our American writers produce the best short stories, says Maurice Thompson in "America." If one difficulty were obviated, I should say that Americans quite excelthe French. Our imagination is firmer and fresher, we invent with more ease, and we see life with a healthler vision. The main trouble with us seems to be that we are timld is the presence of our most original moods.

Examine our best monthly magazines, and they are undoubtedly the best in the world, if you would know just what our most gifted short-story writers can do. In the "Century," 'Scribner's," "Harper's," "The Atlantic," "Lippincott's" and the "Cosmopolitan," appear stories of from 2,000 to 7,000 words, written after a fashion substantially and essentially American, certainly very fine, as a rule, in point of literary style, and possess-ing qualities that go far toward making them the pets and idols of the critic.

Still these stories are not as good, in point of art, as the best French short stories. Why? Here is the rub. It cannot be shown that (although the American story does lack compactness). the French story depends for its superi-ority wholly on directness and conden-I dare say that every short story writer in America has felt an extrinsic force denying him freedom of imagination, while within the urgo and stress were toward full liberty of invention. What is this extrinsic force?
After much careful study, and no laconsiderable experience in short-story
writing, I feel prepared to offer an answer to this question.

The extrinsic force which makes most against the production in America of highest quality short stories, is the city influence, or, what I may call, the urban attraction. Editors are men, when they are not women; and are subject to the forces of their immediate environment. What is in the air imunderstanding, a world-wide significance. This is unfortunate for literature, since it has been flung across the Atlantic, and have made it the prevailing notion.

Hence it is that while all of one best provided in the presence of a large audience. The singing was under the direction of Mr. C. M. Williams, mediately around them has, in their magazines control the trend of literary taste and the scope of dramatic laveution in fiction, and the magazines are controlled, in a large degree, by men who measure everything by the urban standard of taste. Now the fact is that the extra urban influence is the pro-servative of the true dramatic vision, the conservator of invention of lyric purity, of forthright expression. Men of the urban centres have wondered how the plowboy Burns, the peasant Millet, the strolling actor Shakespeare. the Californian Bret Harte, and many another outsider have been able to touch and electrify the endless chord of universal human sympathy. I can tell how they did it. They did it by having held that cord in their very hands, by having looked at it with their own eyes. They knew its sub-stance and what could affect it. Moreover, if Burns, for instance, had lived in a day like ours, he would have found out right suddenly that the magazine editor held the key to the situa-tion, and proposed to have a hand in the final touching-up and toning-down

I am sure that I shall to: h a favorite sore spot in the hearts of all my fellow short-story writers when I mention th fatal facility with which the average magazine editor can suggest changes in a short story as a condition precedent to acceptance. As a rule, the change is eternal ruin to the creation; but you must starve or submit. The editor knows

we Americans who write short stories are the worst handlespeed authors on us-dialect (New England or negro) and croquet party sketch. Everything else is forbidden. If we dare venture on dramatic vigor or imaginative free are countersigned "scaartional." and

It would hardly seem that any person success with the lowest form of vul garity, and yet there is not a truly vigorous inventive imagination now working in American letters that does tween these extremes as scoustlonal. not realize that it is not only possible, but common, to those who hold the

Some have felt that it is license that we want-the lawless liberty of the tory writer aspires in America is the iberty of invention within the limits of purity and truth. He is restive and testly so, under editorial restraints which make that sensational in his stories which in Shakespeare's dramas and Scott's novels has passed to immorallty as high tragedy or as the model

Eliminate the free handling of unboly uselon from the French short story ed there yet remains a residuum of disconside, novel, original, told with thing new, strong and original; but thing new, strong and strong and original; but thing new, strong and strong an

magicines of America are not in sympathy with it. In France it is the news papers, not the magnation, that float the short story into the field of popular consequent upon Inability to bear the

One can forgive the editor of a great monthly journal for imagining that his judgment is commensurate with the cir-When five or six men almost absolutely control the conscience that goes into the making of our short stories, the efficacy of centus is reduced almost to the mini-

When three men hold together. The kingdoms are less by three

Some one might suggest that the newspapers of America are open to the short story writer; but this is not so. Two or three "syndicate editors" controi the larger gates of approach to our dailies, to their shame, be it said, and bere again the one man power is exerted. The doors of forty newspapers are opened and closed to the likes and discovered and closed to the likes and distinct of one man who absolutely controls the "stort-story market" for their columns. The syndicate editor is not to be blamed; he is but a man; he does his very best, but what can be expected of him. His individual tasts and judgment operate in place of the tasts and judgment of forty editors. How can there be much freedom in such a state of affairs? If the syndicate editor chance to be fond of pickled cabbage, forty newspapers will become the organs of pickled cabbage stories. If he be fond of prunes, forty newspapers must swear by prunes.

"But," said I, "len't this mere hack work!"

"What do I care," said he: "I'm in for making my wares go."

Now it seems more than possible that my friend spoke for many, and that after all the editor may be the person imposed upon. It may be that our writers have a contagion among them inimical to forceful dramatic production, and the poor editors have to take the best that is offered. A little further inquiry might discover that these promising young short story writers, now and again found by the typs eyed editors, fall into commonplace lines in ini-

In my own experience I have had my name, en fontes lettres, as Jean Jacques stated it, to some fairly popular stories written to the arbitrary dictation of edltors. One editor, in declining out of hand a story of mine, which has turned out to be the most successful scrap I ever wrote, clinched his judgment by saying: "We have had two readers examine this story, both of whom decide that, while it is dramatically strong, it is too much aside from the popular cur-rent to be available." In other words, it did not happen to hit the taste of an over-worked woman and an under-paid man, who gauged my story and every-body's story by what they dreamed was the current fad in New York City. Such editorial methods are quite legiti-mate. I do not complain, in a personal way, of them. I speak of such a matter here to give an authentic peep at the causes that are effectually operating against the production of first class dra-

matic short stories in America.

There is almost no production of really fine dramatic short stories here. for the simple reason that there is almost no market for them when produced. The people want them; they nose in magazines for them, but the editors will not let them have them.

I must busten to say that this refusal on the part of the American editors is not a willful movement toward decadence; it is, in fact, but the resultant of two forces—the urban influence meeting with the individual influence. The effect upon the short story is to make it a cross between a sonnet and a pastoral done in dialect prose.

At first it would seem improbable that this condition of things is due indirectly to a foreign influence: but a little scrutiny shows that it is. The English critics have seen proper to decide that for a story to possess the "American flavor" it must be either a weak reflection of English thought, or a coarse, crude, backwoods product. Our great strictest economy of myterials. The school at the Boundary was held yescritics admit that the French short story is the best that is written, our magazines will not publish short stories written on the French model by Americans. For example, no American magazine would print such a story as "The Ghost," by Guy de Mauppassant, or one of the "Letters From My Will," by Alphonse Daudet, to say nothing of the far more dramatic stories by other French authors continually appearing in the Parisian journals. Or course, I do not refer to stories whose moral tone is objectionable. I make bold to say that if Poe's "William Wilson," or his "Fall of the House of Usher," or his 'Gold Bug'' were now first written and offered to an American magazine, there are ten chances to one that it would be declined out of hand as being sensational. And yet, when do we see a story comparable in value to one of these in any of our monthly journals?

I believe it is Lowell who has well said that the judgment of the many is of more value than that of the few. For some years, during extensive travel and intercourse with the American people, I have made it my pleasure to inquire into the preferences of readers on the subject of fiction. One thing is certain, the literature of high imagination is what the people want; no one can doubt it who converses with them. They are sick and tired of extreme realism of the commonplace. They even read rank sensational stuff, when

what he wants—and if you'll observe closely you'll see that it is dialect that he wants—and that he is going to have.

The editor is not to blame, he sees what is his duty, but the result is that we Americans who write short stories has never been a favorite of our maga-zine editors. Who is the most popular abort story writer of England? Is it Robert Louis Stevenson? But what American magazine would print such stories as his "New Arabian Nights" If offered by an American short story writer? There is Budyard Kipling, we all read his uncouth but powerfully dramatic sketches; but who of us would dare do that sort of thing if he could Our editors seem to think that art is either steek to finicality or unkempt to frowsiness: they regard everything be-

Hold while I shift my weight to the other foot and I will look at a possible editorial side of the matter; for it may be, after all, that it is the fault of our story writers that has caused all the Parisian artist. I do not share this feet- trouble of which I have been writing. ing. French short-story writers have I readily grant that if the editors can paid the penalty of license by forfeiting | not get good short dramatic stories cast the highest honors of free art. The In a large mold of imagination, they do liberty to which the conscientious short- well to take what they can get. No well to take what they can get. No body will deay that out dialect stories are as good as dialect stories can be, and our croquet party stories are first class of their kind; to improve upon them we should have to improve upon them we should have to improve addifferent breed of negroes, or of New England country folk, and gibt our croquet mailets. Moreover, it cannot be doubted that our editors are sincerely in constant quest of the very best short stories. Every once in a white short stories. Every once in a while an editor "discovers" a new mun or woman who at first bids fair to do some

or to give up and quit! Is it the force of association on one hand or the despair prograstean operations of the editorial tyranny on the other hand;

A shrewd and successful early writer once told me that his forte was knowledge of the editors. Said he "When ulation of the literature he lasis is upon I set out to write for the X: magazine I Beking into shape: so much is human: go for Tom's (the editor's) hobby. He but the American situation aggravates the injury resulting to the short story from this censorship of the greateditors. X magazine abbor it, I make it for Tom, and he pays me well for it. Tom is a good fellow. Well, there is Dock of the Y. monthly: he takes to yawp, the 'Dern yore ole soul' sort, and of course I tak tup for him. Then comes Harry, who runs the Z. magazine. He goes in for stories about New England old maids who live in farm houses and spin and knit and sigh over spilt milk. spin and knit and sigh over spit mile.

It's easy to please him. I just write so many pages half humor, half pathos, and end up in the lonely little burying ground at the old Puritan church. That fetches him every time. Oh, it's as easy as falling off a log when once you get the run of things!"

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Now it seems more than possible that my friend spoke for many, and that after all the editor may be the person imposed upon. It may be that our writers have a contagion among them inimical to forceful dramatic productions have to take tors, fall into commonplace lines in imi-tation of the company that they are forced to keep. At all events, my sympathies are with the man on the tripol; for, take bim as you will, he has to "stand a deal of racket" in the course

of literary affairs.

At this point the question suggests itself in a new form. Possibly both editors and writers in America have lost sight of the true short story. Certainly a mere character sketch is not to be properly called a short story, at least not in the sense contemplated in my discussicn. The best productions of the French short story writers are condensed dramas; now a tragedy, then a comedy, anon a farce; but in every case the sub-stance and the essentials of outright drama are present. The French masters of to-day hold themselves back much nearer to the Elizabethan freedom than our writers ever get.

What is the American short story? We must promptly admit that its average of literary finish is high, that its humor is effective. If we stop short of saying that its composition is good. the stumbling block in our way is the apparent lack of imaginative vigor, and yet we feel that imaginative vigor is near at hand, but repressed. Have we yet learned that a local study, no matter how picturesque, is not a short story? It may be good as a bucolic bit of color, or as a glimpse of out of the way life, but if the invention, the dramatic organism, the story, in short, is not there, there is no vital fiction. Style car not do everything. Rudyard Kipling has shown by practical demonstration how a fine story is still a fine story though dressed in rags. Robert Louis Stevesson continues to make it plain Stevenson continues to make it plain that a short prose drama loses none of its vital force by being set up in gold type. It is substance that sustains, the story must have a body—a living, active, symmetrical body. This is not all: it must have the independence, the fall-viduality, the novelty, the surprise power of original dramatic art, which is world how the very best dramatic short story is written. We know how, I showed think I hear them say, but we are restrained.

What We Owe the Chinese. There was a large congregation present last night at the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church to hear the Rev. Dr. W. A. P. Martin, president of the Imperial Tungwen University of China, which is located at Pekin. He had, he said, just arrived from China, and it was his intention to be heard whenever he got an oppor-tunity to say something for the cause of Christian missionary work. In referring to the World's Fair at Chicago he said that everything connected with the discovery of America would be presented, except the original motive that led to the discovery, and that China's indirect part in the discovery would be ignored. Ages before the time of Columbus an Italian chanced to reach China, who amassed great wealth, and wrote a book of things he had seen in Cathay. This book fell into the hands of Columbus, and it was to discover a shorter route to Cuina and the Iedies that he set out on the voyage, during which he discovered America by accident. The mariner's compass that guided his course west ward and made possible his undertak-ing, was a Chinese invention of cen-

Lawrence G. Mason, the 4 year-old son of Representative and Mrs. William E. Mason, died vesterday at the residence of his parents. The cause of his death was diphtheria, and he had been sick only a week. Congressman Mason, who had been campalgning in Illinois, arrived here last Friday, and is now completely prostrated by the sad death. The remains will be placed in a vanit in this city and will be removed to Chicago in the

Rehtnit Closed Doors. The Methodist Episcopal Bishops continued their sessions with closed deors to-day, and will probably adjourn on Wednesday, if not sooner. To night at 7:45 o'clock there will be a large mass-meeting held at the Metropolitan M. E. Church, Four and a half and C streets northwest, in the interest of the proposed National Methodist University in this city. Addresses will be delivered by Hishopa Minde, Warren and Newman.

Just Praise. The Caristian Herald of New York has this to say of Washington's own Central Union Mission "The success of this Mission in an exceptionally difficult field in a sirtking evidence of the maryelous and devotion and conserve marveious seal, devotion and consecra-tion of the workers. It is the model Mission of the United States."

Tritled With Mis Wife Sum Rud was in the Police Court this afternoon charged with an asseult upon James Robinson in the county. Robinson accused Rud with having triffed with his wife's affections. As in court the case was continued in

FILLED BY THE SYSHOPS.

The Visiting Marhodist Prototes Ad-dress Large Congregations, The pulpits of the leading Methodist charches of this city were occupied yesterlay by the bishops of the church. Large concregations assembled at all the churches and excellent sermous were delivered by the leaders of the

Bishop Thomas Bowman, the senior bishop, preached an interesting sermon at the Metropolitan Church to a large congregation among whom were Presi-dent and Mrs. Harrison. The subject of his discourse was the great importance of religion and its superiority to

overything else obtainable by man.

At Asbury M. E. Church Bishop
Walden discoursed upon the subject of
the love of God to man. The Bishop
elequently explained the great plan of
salvation and urged his congregation keep the homes pure and free from Bishop Foster preached to an Im-

mense congregation at Foundry M. E. Church, and at the conclusion of his rmon the Sacrament was administered. Other Bishops were assigned as follows: Bishop Andrews, Fourteenth-street Church: Bishop Eoss, Hamiline, Bishop Merrill, Wesley Chapel; Bishop Flizgeraid, Mt. Vernon Place, Bishop Newman at Calvary Church, West Washington: Bishop Hurst, Ebenezer: Bishop Vincent, Dumbarton Church, Georgetown: Bishop Nisde, McKendree Church, Bishop Warren, Waugh Church: Bishop Goodsell, Fifteenth-street Church; Bishop Joyce, Douglass Memorial Church

Memorial Church.
Bishop John H. Vincent, the founder
of the Chautauqua, delivered an interest
ing lecture at the Church of the Covenant last evening on the subject "The Chautauqua.Idea," Chautauqua,the Bla-hop said, would give thousands who are leading a life of drudgery recreation, to the frivolous earnestness and culture and to the one sided man symmetry and power to discern the relations of things. Against discord Chautauqua places the peace of Christianity. Chautauqua believes in a mature mind for education and is for the education of parents as well as children. It be lieves that a woman of 45 is a better student than a girl of 14. The Bish op also explained the various departments of Chautauqua and the motives and plans of the Chautusqua Literary and Scientific Circles. The Chatauqua course in reading, the Bishop said, is selected by a council of able educators at home and abroad and now has about

100,000 renders. Dedicated to God, On one of the brightest and most beautiful Sundays of the season and at Washington's most attractive suburban village, Mount Pleasant, the Howard Avenue Congregational Church was dedicated to the service of God with apdedicated to the service of God with ap propriate exercises. On the platform were the pastor, Rev. Charles H. Small. Rev. Dr. S. M. Newman, postor of the District First Congregational Church and Dr. J. E. Rankin, president of Howard University. The dedicatory sermon was delivered by Dr. Rankin, who said the Church is the place in which God meets His people. In the eternal world, however, there is no temple, for there man shall see God and commune with Him in endless love and commune with Him in endiess love and peace. Dr. Newman also made a few emarks and a dedicatory prayer. The uilding it a pretty one story frame one, alued with the ground at \$8,000. The church was organized October, 1886, and Mr. Small has been the pastor from

the date of its formation. The twenty-third anniversary of soul of creation, especially when Gurley Presbyterian Church Sunday-Lewis and Moran, cornetists, accompanists. Secretary Baldwin's report showed total number of scholars and officers on the roll 680, a gain of 30 scholars during the year. McClelland's report showed receipts for the year \$431.79; disbursements, \$304.22; balance in the treasury, \$127.50. There are 600 volumes in the library. The balance on hand of the Youth's Missionary Society is \$208.51. Its officers are: Charles L. Guriey, president; John Dorian, secretary; T. C. Tipton, treasurer. Remarks were made by Rev. Charles S. Miller, pastor of the church Mr. W. B. Gurley, and Rev. M. N Cornelius.

The gospel mass meeting at the Metropolitan M. E. Church yesterday afternoon was well attended. Blahop Ninde of Topeka, Kan., delivered a temperance address, in the course of which he told of an incident which occurred at a Sunday school picule in Kansas. Out of the thousand children present those who had seen a saloon were asked to stand up, and only twelve arcse. The next speaker was Bishop Fitzgerald, who called attention to the fact that the District Commissioners had promised to reduce the number of saloons in the Dis-trict to 400. The Bishop urged the people to assist the Commissioners to reduce the saloons. The only remedy for in temperance the bishops declared was prohibition. Moral sussion and high license were useless. Prohibition has been found to be a success, said the speaker, but the press all over the coun try were publishing untrue stories about prohibition, and doing all it can to aid

The B. & G. B. R. Co. will sell excur-ion tickets from Washington to Phila-leights at rate of one fare for the round-rip for all trains Cotober 31 and Novem-or 5, 2 and 3, good for lifteen days from jate of sale. Similar tickets will also be old to other results in the State of Pena-cial to old to other points in the State of Penn

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